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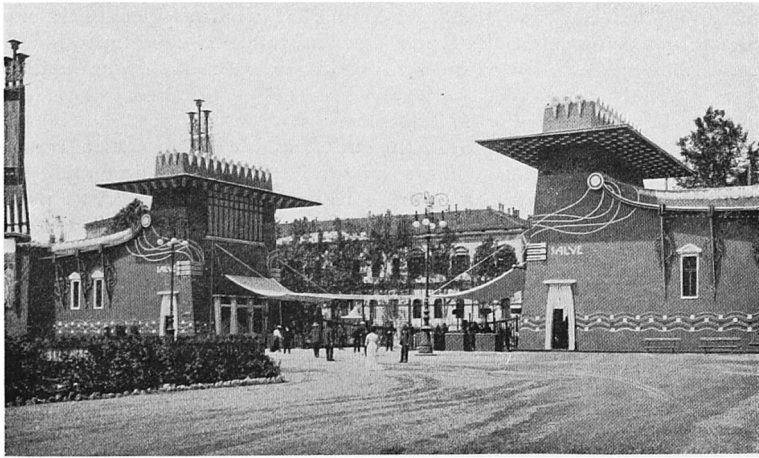
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VIEW OF MAIN ENTRANCE  
By Raimondo D'Aronco

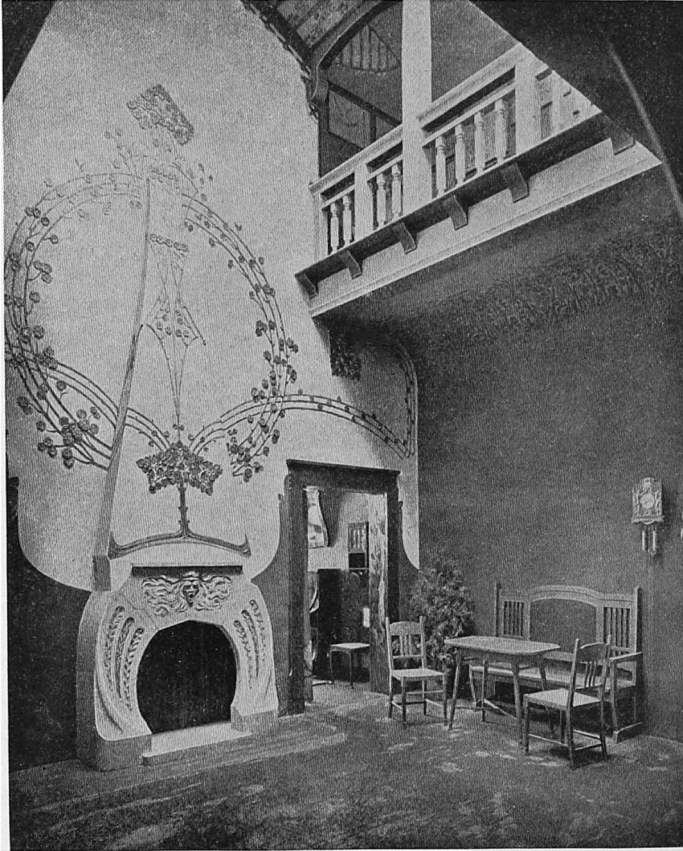
## THE DOMINANT NOTE AT THE TURIN EXPOSITION

Whether or not exhibitions such as that which was opened by the King of Italy at Turin on May 10th last, and is now nearing its close as this review is written, give any impetus to artistic effort or any direction to the trend of art development is a problematical matter. Such enterprises are for the most part the result of local ambition, and however carefully planned and elaborate they may be, they are usually in a very vital sense disappointing.

The interchange of products effected by commerce and the universality of illustrated journals are such in these latter days as to rob any exhibition of the elements of novelty. Art movements are duly chronicled and prevailing styles are as regularly presented in pictorial form. The public is thus promptly informed of what is transpiring in the art world; commercial instinct does not permit the man of ideas to hide his cleverness pending the inauguration of an exposition; and art workers are not compelled to await these recurring events to get hints or guidance or inspiration from their fellow-craftsmen.

Expositions, therefore, are wont to be little more than love-feasts for the exhibitors, and are not apt to be a potent influence in art development. Nations and individuals meet in friendly competition and submit their products in comparison; no one is surprised and few probably are benefited in any appreciable measure.

In this regard the Turin exposition of decorative work is not essentially different from the host of great and minor exhibitions that have preceded it. It is not my purpose to enter into any detailed



AN ARTISTIC CORNER  
By Various Munich Craftsmen

review of individual exhibits. Such a course would involve a series of articles, or would lay a writer open to the charge of favoritism or arbitrary selection. Every visitor to the exposition, however, must have been impressed with the prevalence of one dominant note throughout the various exhibition-rooms—one may liken it to an art

language broken into many dialects, each nation, district, or individual voicing variations on what, for lack of a better term, we are wont to call "l'Art Nouveau" or "Arte Moderna." It is this dominant note, accentuated on every side—in the buildings, in furniture, pottery, jewelry, draperies, designs, in everything—to which I mainly wish to call attention.

This apparently is the chief witness which the exposition bears of the artistic effort of the day. It shows that the various art workers,

however independently they may be striving for an individual expression of the beautiful, are in a sense working unitedly. And this sameness of expression, with differences such as naturally accrue from partly suborned local coloring or racial instincts, is largely due, one suspects, to the currency given by modern methods of publicity.

Some designer hits off a clever idea, which recommends itself to some one else who is looking for an idea in decoration out of the cut-and-dried beats familiar to the ages. Immediately the world is apprised of the new idea; the novelty becomes a vogue; and consciously or unconsciously



FOUNTAIN  
By Herman Billing

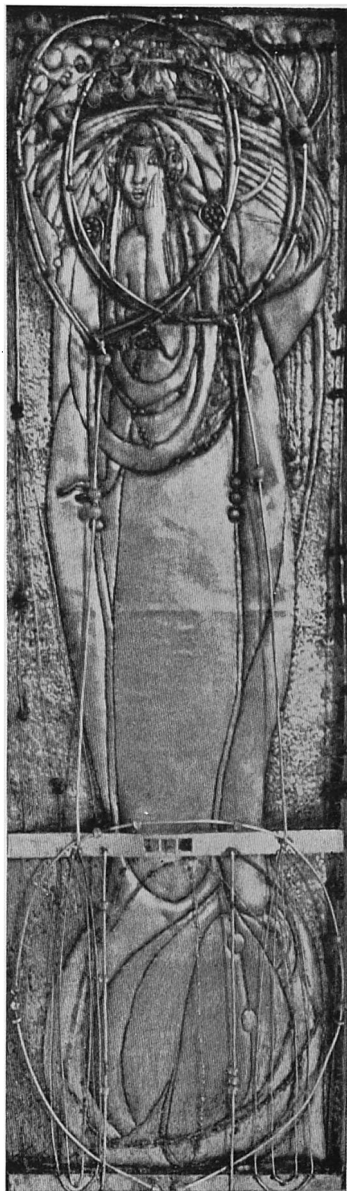
art workers in divers climes find themselves striving on the lines laid down by the innovator, and offering for public admiration their own special brand of the latest fad. Many work in honest effort to produce something adhering to the accepted lines and yet individual enough to be distinctive, and others work in more or less clumsy and palpable imitation. In any event, the style that meets the favor of the hour prevails, which, in view of the fact that demand determines the product, is not surprising. It is not a case of the survival of the fittest; rather it is the uncertain, fleeting vogue of the temporarily favored.

At the present time, as indicated by the exhibits at the Turin exhibition, the accepted motive in decoration is a sort of conventional lotus-leaf arrangement, or, in certain forms, a kind of irregular spiral

suggestive of a climbing plant. One may go through the many exhibition-rooms of the exposition and find this recurring so regularly as a motive in woodwork, metal-work, pottery, textiles, furniture, mural designs, architectural outlines, and what not, that one might readily suppose all the exhibitors were disciples of a single master, whose genius determined everything in the rough, and whose prescriptions and limitations left little for the individual workers save minor modifications.

In a word, the prevalence of the so-called new art is but an evidence of intercommunication of ideas brought about by commerce and modern means of publicity, and the modifications are but witnesses of race and habit of thought. As one might expect, these variations are in a marked measure suggestive of national characteristics.

The Austrian section, both in the articles shown and in the building in which they are housed, is perhaps most pronouncedly of the new-art order; the French section is notable for its lively spirit and for the technical skill displayed by its exhibitors; the Belgian display discloses propinquity to the French and a consequent similarity of tastes and efforts; the German section, like the German character, has a certain heaviness, despite its variety, and at the same time discloses a proneness to the bold and the eccentric; the Dutch section in all its work maintains the national tradition of Holland for soundness, uniqueness, and homely domesticity; Italy, to which the world is indebted for this marshaling



METAL PANEL  
By Herbert and Frances McNair

of decorative work, seems to have run riot in new-art motives, and to have expressed them in a way nothing less than scenic; England and Scotland are more loyal to their home traditions; and America has maintained its reputation for ingenuity, cleverness of conception, and

sureness of adjusting means to ends.

These, the reader will notice, are all national characteristics, and they sufficiently differentiate the exhibits to give abundance of variety even under the ever-present motive of the new art. Many confidently predict that this new style, the favored of the hour, will be the art of the future. Conservative judgment, however, would doubtless discredit this prediction. Much that catches the fancy and pleases for the moment has not the abiding qualities that would make it what Keats would call "a joy forever."

We are wont to reject no inconsiderable



PORCELAIN MOSAIC

By Joost Thooft and Labouchère

percentage of the pictures placed upon the market on the ground that, while not lacking in charm, they would not be good living companions. One fears, from a close inspection of the display at Turin, that the works in which this favored motive constantly recurs would be liable to the same objection. The effect produced is certainly often strong. In many of its applications the motive of the new art is not without a manifest grace and appropriateness; but in other of its uses and applications it seems far-fetched and forced, and calculated soon to pall upon those who adopted it.

I may be permitted here to quote a few words of Walter Crane, whose prominence as a decorative artist gives especial value to his opinion. Mr. Crane's work, his persistent reiteration of a unique ideal of the beautiful, is well known to the art student, and the reader will perhaps not expect him to be enthusiastic as regards the Turin exhibition in its entirety. He is not. He frankly admires what recommends itself to his judgment as a decorator, and as openly criticises what does not so recommend itself. Indeed, while at Turin he put himself on record by saying that if the work shown were judged by rigid canons of criticism, one would scarcely find in the entire exhibition enough good decorative art—and he meant by that decorative art that one would like to live with—to suitably furnish a single home. In his opinion extremes meet, and our twentieth-century new art touches, in its least consciously artistic



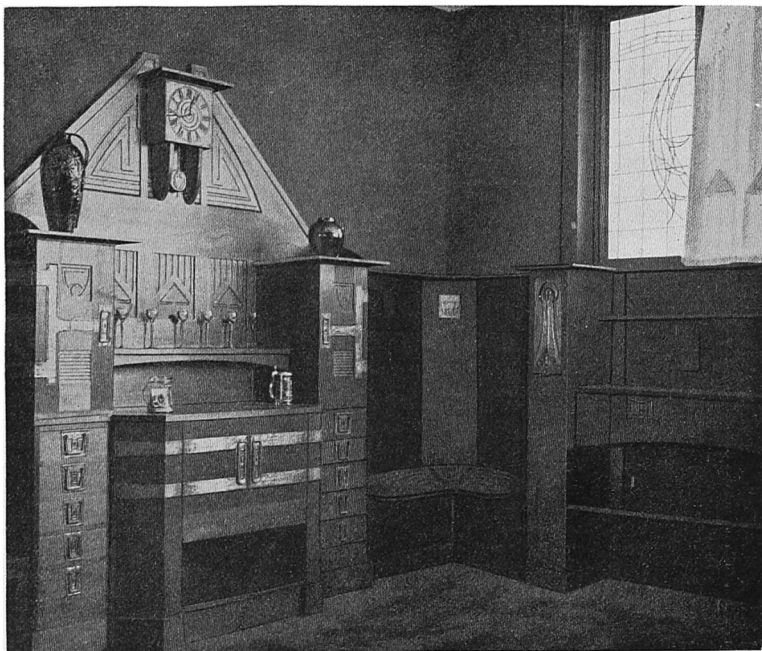
THE WHITE KNIGHT  
By Jessie M. King

form, the rococo decorative confectionery of the palaces of the eighteenth century, and is therefore subject to adverse criticism.

"There are, in truth," says he, "I venture to think, two principles at work in this modern development of decorative art—a principle on the one hand of health, of life and growth, and on the other of decomposition and decay. The first tends in the direction of restraint of ornament and simplicity of construction in architecture, furniture, and the decorative accessories of life. In the crafts of design it maintains the principle of adherence to the limitations as well as to the capabilities of the material, and to the control of use, while

not rejecting new material, new methods, or new uses, should they fall within its province, and be capable of being assimilated and harmonized.

“The second principle rather tends to follow a fashion whithersoever it may lead; to adopt forms and lines for the sake of the forms and lines, irrespective of their adaptation to particular materials and



CORNER OF A LIVING-ROOM  
By Robert Oréans

uses; to gather from every kind without giving time to digest and assimilate; to imitate superficial or artificial mannerisms in all sorts of ways; to use materials simply to display material and skill of hand, without thought of the harmonizing sense of beauty.

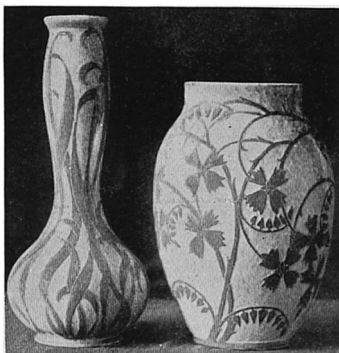
“The choice of woods, for instance in some recent French marquetry work, to express different textures and surfaces, such as rippling water, the coats of animals, etc., is marvelous, and the dexterity of the workmanship so great as to give almost an independent interest to the work. But if we ask if the decoration is appropriate to its purpose—does it help the expression of the object so



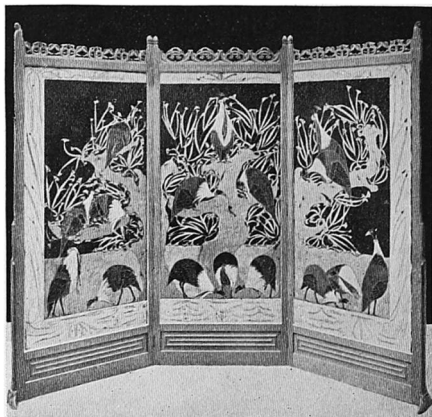
adorned? does it fall into its place as decorative pattern in the scheme of a room?—we cannot find any satisfactory answer. Then, too, if we are content to regard it as pictorial work, and judge such work by pictorial standards and from the pictorial point of view, it fails because, by the very nature of the material, inlaid wood cannot compete in pictorial effect with a painter's work, because the craftsman is necessarily debarred from the use and expression of certain values and atmospheric effects strictly belonging to pictorial art and its methods, and upon which rests its chief value and power of appeal to the eye—its value as a decoration.

"Such work may astonish by its skill and imitativeness, but it is neither satisfactory as pictorial work nor as decoration, whereas the same materials used in a strictly decorative or flat-pattern motive would display the quality of the wood equally well, while producing a reposeful and appropriate decoration, and an object in a room it would be possible to live with."

These words would seem to be rather a harsh stricture on the new art so prevalent in the exhibition-rooms at Turin. The criticism,



VASES  
Made in Stockholm



SCREEN  
By G. W. Dysselhof

however, one must admit, is merited. Every conscientious worker in decorative art will recognize and welcome the evidences of new life, of health and growth; and every such worker must deprecate the oft-recurring witnesses of mere imitation, the subservient following of a fashion or a fad. And it must be patent to every visitor to the Turin exposition, that, despite the intrinsic beauty, the richness, and the marvelous execution of much that is displayed in the galleries, there is altogether too little suggestive of



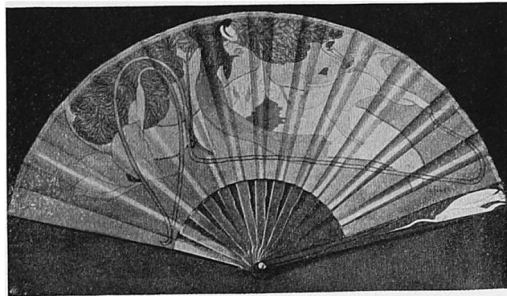
VASES  
Made in Florence

strong individual or racial instinct, and too much to force upon one the conviction that the many are aping the few or the one, seeking to transport a motive out of the environment that gave it birth, and to wreak changes on a style utterly foreign to the life of those who adopt it.

In these days of incessant striving after novelty, when the spirit of the people seems to rebel against the perpetuation of old styles and old principles of decoration, it is certainly gratifying to find some one bright enough to conceive a new idea and energetic enough to force its acceptance by the people.

It is not gratifying, however, to find one individual or one nation laying down principles or formulating rules for an aggregate of individuals or nations. A style appropriate to one country is not appropriate to another, and a style that would meet the requirements and satisfy the tastes of one community would not meet the requirements and satisfy the tastes of another.

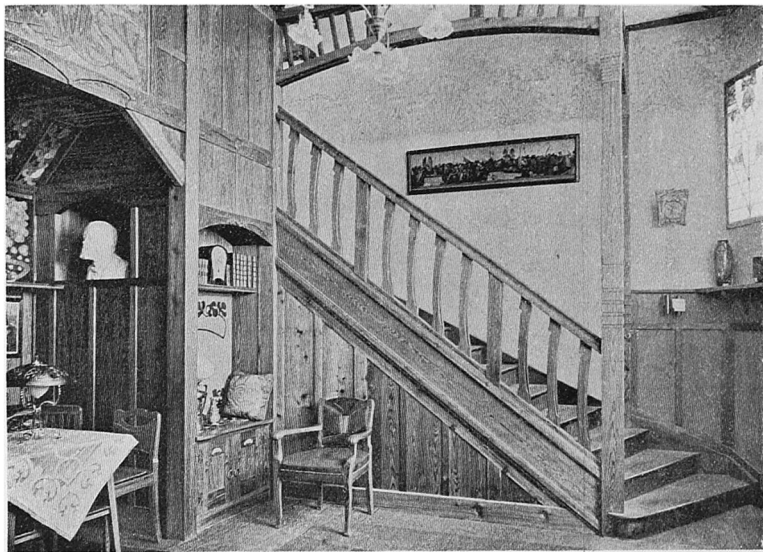
To the present writer, therefore, it seems the weakness of the Turin exhibitors that they have been willing to sacrifice local coloring, national traditions, racial individuality, in deference to a whim of fashion which is quite as much the product of commercial enterprise as of a legitimate effort on the part of the designer to give a new expression of the beautiful in decorative art. It would be better for the Dutch to evolve something strictly Dutch and glory in their achievement, better for the Germans to shape their work on strictly Teutonic lines and adhere to them, better for the Italians to formulate an expression of the beautiful in keeping with their temperament and habits, better for the French to reflect Parisian *chic*, for the English to be loyal to



FAN  
By G. de Feure

their skies, for the Americans to reflect the new life and hopes and ambitions of a new world, than for all to take their cues from a single atelier or a single establishment and to undertake to shape the life and thought of divers climes, so far as decorative art is concerned, in molds that do not fit.

This in a broad general way seems to be exactly what the exhibitors at Turin have undertaken. That in many cases they have had a

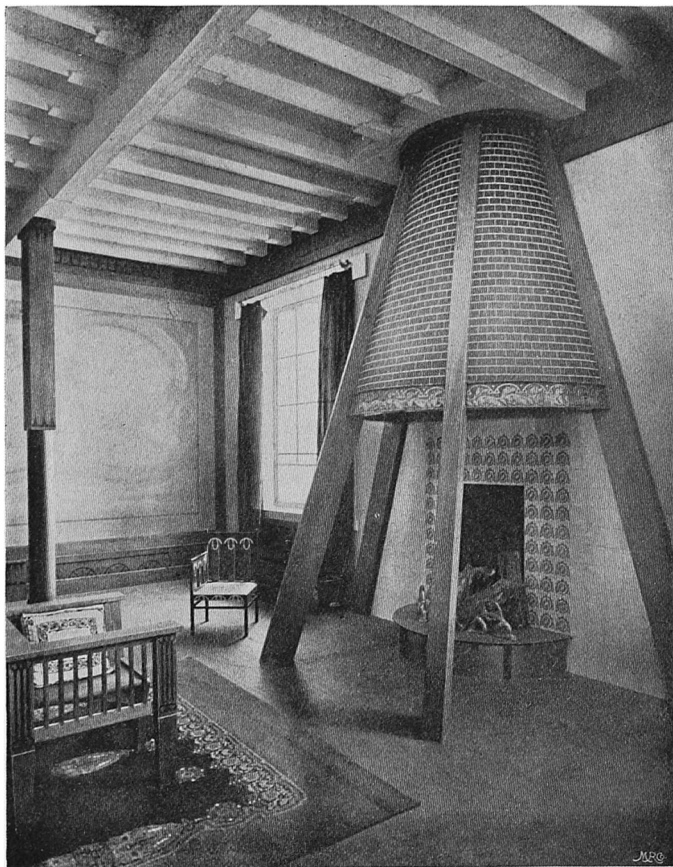


CORNER OF A DINING-ROOM  
By H. E. Von Beelepsch-Valendas

fair measure of success goes without saying; much of the work shown, one cannot gainsay, has grace, beauty, appropriateness. These articles one might care to take home and live with. It is no less true, on the other hand, that much of it has little to recommend it save the element of the striking, the unique, the unusual. These articles one might look at and comment on, possibly with the admiration that is born of surprise, and would then be quite content to banish them from one's thought.

It is an old maxim not to read a book until it is a year old, lest one afterward regard the hours spent on it as waste time. So in styles of decoration, it might be a good maxim not to adopt the latest fad, not to pin allegiance to the latest decorative motive evolved by an ambitious designer—and the same maxim would apply

alike to art workers and art patrons—lest one soon awake to the fact that the new scheme of decoration is a vagary, pleasing enough while the novelty lasts, but lacking the qualities necessary to make it a



HALL IN DUTCH SECTION  
By Christ. Wegerif

permanent joy, and hence calculated to pall. Novelty may be pleasing for the moment, which, of course, is not saying that it is legitimate decorative art. Movement is not always progress; neither is the latest innovation in art of any sort to be regarded as a permanent accretion to the expression of the beautiful. HENRY P. DOUGLAS.